

## **Hepatitis C Case Investigation Checklist**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has created the following checklist to assist investigations of hepatitis C (HCV) cases by local boards of health in Massachusetts. It suggests a sequence in which investigations should be approached, the recommended elements of investigations, and the information that should be reviewed with each case. This checklist is for Board of Health use only – it is not required and does not need to be submitted with the case report, although you may wish to keep it in your file to document your investigation. For more information on the background and rationale for this process, please refer to the chapter on HCV in the Massachusetts *Guide to Surveillance and Reporting*.

*Upon receiving a report of HCV from a lab or healthcare provider, please follow the process detailed below. Always prioritize the investigation of acute hepatitis C cases over chronic infections.*

### **1. Contacting the case's healthcare provider (do this first)**

- ☐ Attempt to contact by phone first
- ☐ If no response after 3 attempts, send a form fax or letter (sample letter attached)
  - If a letter needs to be sent...✉
  - ☐ The letter should include the following:
    - ☐ Case's name
    - ☐ Description of your responsibility to notify and educate the case
    - ☐ Indication that you have been trying to reach the provider
    - ☐ Timeline of when you intend to contact the case (unless the provider selects an alternate time)
    - ☐ That it is strongly preferred that the provider inform the case of her/his diagnosis
    - ☐ Information on how the provider can contact you
  - ☐ Include a copy of the hepatitis C case report form with the fax or letter and indicate the sections the provider should fill out
  - ☐ Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which the hepatitis C case report may be returned

### **2. Once you have contacted the case's provider**

- ☐ Explain that the information obtained is strictly confidential, discuss purpose of surveillance as necessary
- ☐ Confirm the report and diagnosis
- ☐ Obtain copies of any additional related labs that are available
  - ☐ EIA – HCV antibody (e.g. ELISA)
  - ☐ Immunoblot assay (e.g. RIBA, SIA)
  - ☐ HCV RNA (e.g. RT-PCR, b-DNA)
  - ☐ Liver function tests (only needed for acute cases)
- ☐ Obtain as much information for the case report as possible – if the provider refuses to provide risk-related information, attempt to get demographic information and laboratory results (listed above), in particular for any acute cases

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- ☐ Inform the provider that they should discuss this report with the case; the provider should inform the case that someone from the board of health will contact them to discuss the report
- ☐ Find out when it will be possible for you to contact the case directly (how much time does the provider need to contact the case?)

### **3. Contacting the case**

Use whatever method(s) you normally use to contact the case. This might include attempting to contact the case via phone first. If there is no phone number available or if there is no answer after 3 tries over at least one week, a home visit can be conducted, if feasible. Alternatively, a letter can be sent to the case's address (sample letter attached). This letter should be non-specific and discuss a public health concern that you need to discuss.

If a letter needs to be sent... ↩

- ☐ Send the letter certified mail
- ☐ Ask in the letter what the best way for you to contact the case would be; then follow the rest of the investigation as indicated below
- ☐ If no contact is made with the case 4 weeks after having sent the certified letter, please fax or mail all information obtained on the case at that point to MDPH (include a copy of the lab results)

### **4. Once you have contacted the case**

- ☐ Explain confidentiality and the purpose for obtaining the requested information
- ☐ Inform the case that the information that will be discussed is highly personal and that it is asked of every person with hepatitis C and is important for our understanding of the infection.
- ☐ Ask the case if they have any questions about HCV or surveillance; refer the case to MDPH if they have questions and need additional information
  
- ☐ Determine if a provider is currently treating the case, and what that provider's specialty is
  - If the case is not currently in medical care... ↩
  - ☐ Suggest that they contact a primary care doctor for treatment evaluation
    - ☐ As necessary, provide a referral to a primary care provider
    - ☐ Discuss the benefits of being assessed by a specialist with the case as necessary
  
- ☐ Review HCV transmission with the case – risks, behaviors, and prevention; use the report form to guide your discussion
- ☐ If the case is actively injecting drugs, refer to treatment programs and needle exchange programs
  
- ☐ Discuss the potential for sexual transmission with the case
  - If the case is concerned about sexual transmission... ↩
  - ☐ Recommend using a condom to reduce the likelihood of exposing sexual partners to HCV
  - ☐ Review proper condom use as necessary
  
- ☐ Discuss the risks of alcohol consumption with the case

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- ☐ Assess whether the case currently drinks alcohol
  - If they currently drink alcohol... ⬇
  - ☐ Recommend elimination of any alcohol consumption – refer to alcohol treatment/support as necessary
- ☐ Recommend that the case discuss any medication use (including alternative/herbal medications) with a provider to ensure that they are not going to damage their liver
- ☐ Determine if the case is at risk for either hepatitis A or B. If so, provide referral so that the case may receive the vaccines
- ☐ Fill out the hepatitis C case report form based on your discussion with the case – if there are additional sections for which you require information, query the case directly – fill in information that was not obtained from the health care provider to the extent possible
- ☐ Provide the case with a fact sheet on HCV and any other relevant materials
- ☐ Provide a phone number for the case to call to get additional information later, if needed

### **5. Reporting to MDPH**

- ☐ Attach a copy of ALL relevant lab reports to the hepatitis C case report form
- ☐ Mail or fax\* (617-983-6813) the report form and attached lab reports to MDPH

Address:        Surveillance Program, Room 241  
                     MA Department of Public Health  
                     305 South Street  
                     Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

\*If faxed, please mail an original copy at your earliest convenience.

- ☐ Call MDPH if there are any questions about reporting (617-983-6800 or 888-658-2850)

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